

Claims

1. A method for navigating the programming of an audio program provider in which the provider presents to listeners a standardized method for searching, selecting and playing programming, wherein:

the provider offers a top channel accessible simultaneously by a plurality of listeners, wherein each listener receives substantially a same playlist;

a listener reacts to program items that are played on the top channel, a cumulative history of a listener's reactions comprising a user preference;

the provider offers an ability to create a first side channel wherein an alternate personal playlist is already prepared when the listener reacts in a first manner to a program item of the top channel;

the first side channel including programming that reflects a combination of a style of the provider of the selected top channel, and the user preference, wherein the listener creates a personal playlist of programming in near real time during the course of listening and reacting to a channel of the program provider.

2. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the listener may immediately select either one of the top channel and the first side channel.

3. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the listener's reaction includes a negative response to a program item of the top channel.

4. The method of navigation of claim 3 wherein a style of the first side channel reflects a listener's dislike of a program item of the top channel.

5. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the program provider is an affiliate of a network of program providers, a network operator provides guidance in methods for the program providers to assemble personal playlists, and a listener has access to distinct personal playlists on sidechannels of respective distinct program providers.

6. The method of navigation of claim 5 wherein the personal playlists substantially comprise program items from a respective provider's in-house program material.

7. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the first side channel includes a playlist that comprises in majority the program items of the top channel.

8. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the listener reacts in the first manner to program items of the personal playlist of the first side channel, and a further personalized playlist is already prepared when the listener so reacts, thereby further refining the first side channel.

9. The method of navigation of claim 8 wherein a second side channel is already prepared when the listener reacts in a second manner to a program item of either the top channel or the first side channel.

10. The method of navigation of claim 1 wherein the control device incorporates a means of input for voice commands and a means of output for listening to programming;

the audio program provider incorporates a means for interpreting and responding to a voice command;

a listener reaction comprises a voice command;

a provider offer comprises a voice reply;

the programming is accessed and retrieved by means of a wireless network connected to the Internet.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the program provider is an affiliate of a network of program providers, a network operator provides guidance in methods for the program providers to assemble personal playlists, and a listener has access to distinct personal playlists on sidechannels of respective distinct program providers.

12. A method of navigation of the programming of an audio program provider affiliated with a network of other providers wherein:

a standardized control device is used to search, select and play programming of the providers, the providers being the operators of stations;

the control device includes a display screen to assist a listener in navigating programming;

the display screen includes distinct portions dedicated for displays of specific types of information about the programming, the respective portions of the display screen being used in a common manner among a majority of affiliated providers of the network;

a network operator guides the affiliated providers with respect to the type of information that is to be displayed in respective portions of the display screen;

a portion of the display screen describes a station identity of the program provider, and a further portion of the display screen describes a channel of programming offered by the station;

the control device includes a first input device whereby the listener can select between at least two channels of the station, including a top channel, and a side channel, the top channel being accessible simultaneously by a plurality of listeners, wherein each listener receives substantially a same playlist, and the side channel comprising an alternate playlist distinct from that of the top channel;

the listener being able to immediately select either one of the top channel and the side channel.

13. The navigation method of claim 12 wherein the first input device operates upon a non-changing portion of the display screen.

14. The navigation method of claim 13 wherein the control device includes two input devices, the first input device which operates to select a channel of the station, and a second input device which operates to select the station operated by the provider.

15. The navigation method of claim 14 wherein at least one of the first input device and the second input device is a rotatable dial.

16. The navigation method of claim 14 wherein a third input device comprises a rotatable dial positioned coaxially around the second input device, and the third input device operates to select a category of programming.

17. The navigation method of either of claim 16 wherein at least one of the second input device and the third input device operates upon a respective non-changing portion(s) of the display screen.

18. The navigation method of claim 12 wherein the side channel is accessible simultaneously by a plurality of listeners, wherein each listener receives substantially a same playlist on the alternate channel.

19. The navigation method of claim 12 wherein the side channel includes a personalized playlist that is unique to the user.

20. A method of navigation of the programming of a distinct station of an audio program provider affiliated with a network of other stations of providers wherein:

the audio program providers offer information that is of interest to users, including a top channel of each provider comprising a default playlist of information comprising distinct playlist items that are played sequentially on an audio device;

a standardized control device is used to search, select and play programming of the providers, the control device including a display screen to assist a user in navigating programming;

the control device operates in a substantially common manner when used to play programming of stations affiliated with the network;

at least one search control selector of the control device is used to control multiple levels of information, higher levels being of a relatively broad descriptive nature, and lower levels defining a style of a particular playlist of information;

the user operates a modification feature of the control device to modify the default playlist of information, thereby creating a personalized playlist of information from the default playlist of information, the at least one search control selector and the modification feature being distinct elements of the control device;

the personalized playlist of information reflecting a user's history of modifying the default playlist;

a search control selector enabling the user to immediately select either the default playlist of the top channel or the personalized playlist of information.

21. The method of navigation of claim 20 wherein a station selector comprises a search control selector, and the station selector is used to search and select the stations of affiliated providers of information.

22. The method of navigation of claim 21 wherein a further search selector comprises a channel selector which operates at a level below the station selector to search and select playlists of information within a selected station.

23. The method of navigation of claim 22 wherein a portion of the display screen is dedicated to display an identity of the station, and a further portion of the display screen is dedicated to identify a type of information that is being audibly played.

24. The method of navigation of claim 23 wherein an additional further portion of the display screen is dedicated to specifically identify the information that is being audibly played.

25. A method of payment for audio programming wherein a listener receives a default channel of programming from a station affiliated with a network of further stations, wherein:

a managing organization operates a benefit program whereby a listener receives credits for engaging in certain activities while listening to affiliated program sites;

the certain activities including at least one of: responding to surveys, responding to advertising, and paying a subscription fee;

the programming is from a top channel comprising a playlist that includes commercial advertising;

a personalized playlist is provided to the listener when the listener performs the certain activities, the personalized playlist having a reduction in commercials in relation to the top channel playlist, the reduction in commercials being proportionate to a quantity of credits the listener receives;

the listener may immediately select either one of the top channel's playlist and the personalized playlist.

26. A method of navigation of the programming of a distinct station of an audio program provider affiliated with a network of other stations of providers wherein:

at least some of the stations are owned and operated independently from each other;

the station offers a top channel accessible simultaneously by a plurality of listeners, wherein each listener receives substantially a same playlist;

a listener reacts to program items that are played on the top channel, a cumulative history of a listener's reactions comprising a user preference;

the station offers an ability to create a first side channel wherein an alternate personal playlist is already prepared when the listener reacts to a program item of the top channel, the listener is automatically switched from the top channel to the side channel when the listener reacts to the program item of the top channel, both the top channel and the side channel being immediately accessible to the listener after the side channel is created;

the first side channel including programming that reflects a combination of a style of the station that offers the selected top channel, and the user preference, wherein the listener creates a personal playlist of programming in near real time during the course of listening and reacting to a channel of the station;

a network operator provides guidance in methods for the stations to enable listeners to assemble personal playlists, and a listener has access to distinct personal playlists on sidechannels of respective distinct stations.